down an incline, scarce four feet in width, to a cellar: this cellar is adjacent to a dining-room in Wilton-place: there is a yard 7 feet wide, and perhaps 20 feet long, in connection, part of which (about 10 feet long) is shedded over: into this shamble whole hecatombs are precipitated annually, and skins and offal lie in heaps on the open pavement whole days. Night by night the baleful lowings of the pent-up cattle disturb the vicinal residents. With scarce space to stand, such an endurance is not likely to freshen the fevered and half-maddened bullock, or to render the meat wholesome; nor is the grievance of infra-brutal bellowings less harrowing to the occupant of the next house than the stench which during the hot weather pervades the whole quadrangle between Wilton-place, Knightsbridge, and the next traverses.

QUONDAM.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

THE reports of the meetings of the British Association, fraught with interest as they must be to men of mental culture and scientific attainments, such as are, doubtless, the majority of your readers, and such as every member of our profession should be, have probably been seen and read by most of us. For my own part the perusal has afforded me gratification of no ordinary kind, though not unmingled. The rapid progress made in scientific research, and the brilliant discoveries on the eve of which we appear to be verging, must fill the heart of every Englishman with inward satisfaction and pride. The fact, also, of the interest taken by Government, and the disposition it seems to manifest for the furtherance of science, is very encouraging, and will assuredly add much to our national reputation.

A systematic scrutiny of the heavens from some favourable spot in the southern hemisphere, and with ample instrumental means, could not fail to add to our laurels, by the production of a valuable catalogue of nebulæ, and the extension of our knowledge amongst the mysterious and remote orbs set by their Creator in latitudes beyond the reach of the generality of observers.

The subject of terrestrial magnetism has been invested during this meeting with peculiar interest, and the response given by Government to an earlier application from the British Association is already productive of abundant results, the apparent complexity of the phenomena are becoming disentangled, the laws of secular and periodic changes established, and solar influence acknowledged.

I will not add more or occupy time by a further review of the interesting matter brought forward during the meeting: I have said enough for my purpose. We are, and with reason, proud of the discoveries, made by our countrymen, of the long-existing laws which govern the material universe. But now, sir, I would speak as an architect, and I feel I shall have the sympathy of my professional brethren: has it not often been the lot of most of us to conduct those who have had some claim on our attention, through public buildings, churches, or other edifices, the erection of which has cost their authors many a long night of toil, study, and calculation? and on such occasions almost invariably it happens that a critique is passed on the merits or demerits of such structure, but no question is asked, no allusion made to the man to whose skill and taste the building is indebted for its symmetry and beauty, its proportion, fitness, and harmony. A slight like this,—a total disregard to the *architect*,—we all must feel, even though we may not have been professionally connected with the building in question. Yet, in comparison, the structure of our earth, the wonders and beauties with which it is encompassed, the sublimity of universal creation, and the works of a still more wonderful ARCHITECT, any building, however gorgeous and magnificent, sinks into insignificance; and still we find no notice taken during this meeting (so far as I can see by the reports) of that great Architect who designed, planned, and executed a mansion for man so beauteous, and a system in completeness surpassing our comprehension, a knowledge of which He permits us gradually to attain, through the appliances of science, in such a measure as He thinks fit. It would, therefore, become us as mortals, whilst receiving his favours, to acknowledge with humility the hand that bestows them, and the wisdom of that WORD by whom all things were made.

PHILOLOGOS.

USE OF PLATE GLASS.

THE improvement which has been observable during the last few years in the appearance of the commercial and other buildings lining the principal streets of our metropolis, and also in the larger towns throughout the kingdom, may be attributed mainly to one cause—the use of plate glass. Those who look back some ten or twenty years and remember the long rows of meaningless (and, in many instances, lop-sided cant-bowed) windows, with a very large proportion of the light-room blinded by gratings of sash bar, and the glass itself very attenuated, and having a blotchy and uneven appearance; and when the facia board was "scooped" out at the ends to give the desired return projection to the incongruous cornice above,—will look with surprise at the costly arrangements which now take their place.

There is yet much to be done in this path. We have in many instances yet to see the upper stories of shopped houses carried by something substantial, and not having the appearance of being supported on glass, which, although it generally projects from the face of the brickwork, has a very unpleasant and unarchitectural appearance. Surely we are advanced enough, and possess means and appliances sufficient to use our new material in a business-like and architectural manner, without losing any of that justly-prized and untaxed article—light; and without loading the lower story so much as to have an appearance of heaviness inconsistent with the purposes of trade.

Architects did not like to fill in the window-openings in their drawings with the usual allowance of cross-bars: where the whole opening is filled with one, or, at most, two large sheets of glass, the improvement and increased breadth are wonderful.

With regard to Gothic buildings, are we bound to stick to lead lights in small diamonds? Why did our forefathers use lead lights? for the same reason that they used tinder-boxes and dip-candles—because they had nothing better. Why all this hindrance to light? If we want subdued light, can we not have the glass tinted, deadened, or ground? But why not have it in large sheets? is there anything particularly good in diamond lights?

We certainly do live in a "mediæval" age, but why not combine the good parts of the mediæval with the present advanced state of the arts and sciences, and adapt the old to the present time, and not keep back and adapt the present time to the old, the crude, and the unfinished?

Would it not be useful and practicable to *corrugate* large sheets of glass for its application to transparent roofing, and for many other purposes requiring great stiffness with a large amount of light? and we have yet to see it made malleable, in order to its adaptation to various purposes to which it is now inapplicable.

T. G.

CHRISTIAN ART.—THE "ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN."

MY attention was drawn the other day to an interesting letter in your columns, headed "The Conception of the Virgin a Misnomer as applied to the Painting by Murillo, from the Soult Gallery." (p. 502, *ante*.)

Every lover of the poetry of Christian Art must feel indebted to the author of that letter for his attempt to enforce a careful application to pictures of their proper and technical titles; but before he requires us to acquiesce in so bold a departure from established nomenclature as the one he proposes, I think we may fairly demand a more extended appeal to facts.

On the hypothesis of Mr. Hendrie all pictures professing to represent the "Conception of the Virgin" must have for their principal figure St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin, but he does not refer us to any examples of such pictures. It is very true that mediæval artists "delighted in the complete development of the history of the mother of Christ;" but though Mr. Hendrie states "that the Conception of the Virgin formed the first of the series in representations of her history," he does not inform us of one instance of such series arranged consecutively, with the "Conception" placed at the commencement.

In the extract from the MS. from Mount Athos, Mr. Hendrie appears to quote from memory, since the passage is not marked with inverted commas. It would be more satisfactory if the exact words and reference were given.

In the catalogue of Murillo's pictures, appended to Mr. Stirling's learned work on Spanish Art, we find no less than twenty-five entitled "Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception," and two entitled the "Assumption." I need hardly say that the twenty-five are pictures of the Virgin, not of St. Anne, and nothing could be more unlikely than that Mr. Stirling should have applied to them a misnomer, since Murillo of course was one of his chiefest studies, and Murillo has been called by pre-eminence the "painter of the 'Conception.'" The popular enthusiasm which rose so high in Murillo's time on the subject of the newly promulgated doctrine of our Lady's "Immaculate Conception" is quite sufficient to account for the frequent repetition of the subject in Murillo's works; and we should bear in mind that the term "Conception of the Virgin" is a contraction of the full title, viz. "Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception;" and pictures so denominated are, I would submit, an attempt to embody and express, so far as pencil can, the highest conceivable perfection of womanly form and character; such perfection as one should ascribe to a being believed, like her own divine offspring, to have been born of spotless purity.

Such, I believe, is the true interpretation of the title "Conception of the Virgin." Should any wish for further information, they may find much valuable and interesting matter at page 904, vol. 2, of Stirling's "Annals of the Artists of Spain."

T. F. C.

Mag. Coll. Oxford.

BATHS AND WASHHOUSES AT BILSTON, NEAR BIRMINGHAM.

THE spread of these establishments is a gratifying feature of the day. On another page we publish a plan and view of the baths and washhouses now in course of erection at Bilston, near Birmingham.

Some of our readers will recollect Bilston as the locality so severely visited by the cholera in 1832 and 1849. In August and September of the former year 3,566 of the inhabitants were attacked and 742 died in less than seven weeks.

We are happy to announce the determination of the inhabitants to erect this useful establishment, so peculiarly necessary in all similar towns; and are informed that this boon to the inhabitants of Bilston is in a great measure to be attributed to the energy and labours of the Rev. J. B. Owen and others, whose active benevolence was apparent at the time of the late fearful visitation.

The designs have been prepared by Messrs. Ashpitel and Whichcord, architects, and the contractor for the building is Mr. Horrebon, of Wolverhampton.

There are in the whole nineteen baths divided into four classes; also vapour and shower baths, a large swimming bath, 37 feet by 24 feet, and a plunging bath. The washhouse has ten washing-stalls, with a separate drying-closet to each, and with wringing machine, &c. There is also a residence on the first floor over the office and entrances.

The contracts for builder and engineer's work have been taken for 2,125*l*.

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